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Weekly Summary

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The WEEKLY SUMMARY, issued every Friday morning by the Office of Current Intelligence, reports and analyzes significant developments of the week through noon on Thursday. It frequently includes material coordinated with or prepared by the Office of Economic Research, the Office of Strategic Research, the Office of Geographic and Cartographic Research, and the Directorate of Science and Technology. Topics requiring more comprehensive treatment and therefore published separately as Special Reports are listed in the contents.

Warning Notice
Sensitive Intelligence Sources and Methods Involved

Additional Warning
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23 Argentina: Opposing Mrs. Peron

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ARGENTINA: OPPOSING MRS. PERON

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The political position of President Maria Estela Peron has weakened during the past two months. Politicians are expressing open criticism, and military officers are increasingly dissatisfied with the performance of her government.

The rift in Peronist party ranks was underscored last week when an assemblage of dissident left-wing Peronists in Buenos Aires formed the Authentic Peronist Party. This group, however, is more a political embarrassment than a threat to Mrs. Peron, and it will probably be denied recognition.

On the other hand, growing strains within the Justicialist coalition that brought the Peronists to power may be harder to resolve. On March 12, the group headed by former president Arturo Frondizi issued its first public criticism of the government's economic policies. It was joined a few days later by another small party that denounced the "disorder of public finances." While there are no indications that Frondizi or leaders of the other parties are ready to pull out of the coalition, a serious economic decline would probably force them to abandon the government, especially as the 1977 election draws nearer.

A recent survey of army and navy officers has disclosed some dissatisfaction with Mrs. Peron's government. Contempt for her dependence on Minister of Social Welfare Lopez Rega reportedly has grown to the point where many officers would like to see her step down voluntarily.

There is no effort under way to persuade her to do so and none is anticipated, but the consensus among the cross section of officers surveyed is that Argentina would be better off with another president, especially if the military had a hand in the selection. This is a major shift from the view held by the military just a few months ago. At that time, it felt that there was no alternative to Mrs. Peron.

President Peron
In need of support

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Renewed inflation and the prospect that it will grow are serious problems for military personnel, who are already finding it difficult to live on their salaries. The recent devaluation will hurt defense spending, especially the purchase of foreign materiel.

The armed forces welcomed the government's tough stand against terrorism, but now many officers are upset by the failure to deal the terrorists a decisive blow. Their frustrations are reflected in growing criticism of their own leaders as well as of the government. The chief complaint voiced against the three service commanders is that they have gone along with the politicians' policies.

The armed forces are still reluctant to take over the government again, and as long as this attitude continues it is the best guarantee of Mrs. Peron's serving out her term of office. If their dissatisfaction with the political leadership continues to grow, however, military leaders will probably begin to press for her resignation and to look for legal alternatives.

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